

## **Report to Cabinet Member for Fire & Rescue and Communities**

**March 2021**

### **2020/21 Community Initiative Funding - Underspend**

#### **Report by Director of Law and Assurance**

**Electoral division(s): All**

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#### **Summary**

The County Council's Community Initiative Fund (CIF) provides grant funding to support community projects that aim to make a positive impact on people's wellbeing. This fund is 140K per annum. A decision has been taken by the Council to cease this funding, so 2020/21 is its final year of operation.

At the end of each financial year a decision is taken to establish the route for any unallocated CIF funding. It is proposed that any in-year (2020/21) underspend of CIF should be used to be utilised to support the newly established Food Partnerships across West Sussex and charities that specialise in the redistribution of otherwise wasted food.

#### **Recommendation:**

The Cabinet Member for Fire & Rescue and Communities is asked to approve that any in-year underspend in the Community Initiative Fund for 2020/21 will be utilised to bolster the activity of Food Partnerships across West Sussex and charities that specialise in the redistribution of otherwise wasted food.

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#### **Proposal**

##### **1 Background and context**

- 1.1 The County Council has been awarding community grants through a Community Initiative Fund (CIF) since 2006, supporting community groups and organisations across West Sussex with the aim of enhancing the delivery of the Council's priorities through enabling communities to help themselves. CIF has a budget of £140,000, based on £2,000 per councillor, pooled on a County Local Committee (CLC) basis.
- 1.2 The fund is administered to projects through one of two routes, depending on their size. The Micro Fund is a paper-based application form open to funding bids from small-scale projects with a total value of £750 or less. The West Sussex Crowd is a crowdfunding platform through which the County Council can

contribute towards an element of a project or where the total project costs exceed £750.

- 1.3 Each year, a decision is taken to establish the route for any unused funds at the end of the financial year that have not been distributed to local community groups or projects.
- 1.4 In previous years, underspend has been rolled over to the next year's CIF budget, used to mitigate savings required in front line service areas and in 2019/20, to support the Council's response to COVID-19.
- 1.5 As part of the budget decision for 2021/22, the CIF has been ceased, therefore 2020/21 is the final year for this funding stream.

## **2 Proposal details**

- 2.1 It is proposed that any in-year underspend in the CIF will be utilised to bolster the activity of newly established Food Partnerships across West Sussex and charities that specialise in the redistribution of otherwise wasted food. These organisations play a vital role in providing local accessible support within communities (including via schools), complementing the work of the Community Hub.
- 2.2 In addition to providing practical assistance for those experiencing hardship, these partnerships and organisations play a pivotal role in encouraging healthy eating, increasing skills and confidence with cooking, building knowledge of sustainable food production and reducing waste. These are all aspects that will feature in the offer being developed by the Library Service as part of the virtual Holiday Activity programme which will launch for the Easter Holidays.

## **3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)**

- 3.1 The alternative to roll this funding over for the 2021/22 funding pot cannot be considered as the CIF has been ceased. The Cabinet Member for Fire & Rescue and Communities considered other options for this funding, including being used to mitigate other council savings and felt that given the pandemic this was the best use of this funding.

## **4 Consultation, engagement and advice**

- 4.1 The Cabinet Member for Fire & Rescue and Communities has informed all members of the County Council of this proposed decision and has not received any significant concerns, only three responses were received none of which were opposed to the proposed decision. During the informal round of the county local committees held in February and March 2021, many members expressed that they were supportive of this approach.

## **5 Finance**

- 5.1 There are no additional costs to this proposal as it is from an established budget. The consequences for the proposed decision are positive, as it will provide further funding to bolster the activity of newly established Food Partnerships across West Sussex and charities that specialise in the redistribution of otherwise wasted food that may otherwise have been lost.

## 6 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
CIF projects still going through the crowdfunding process may not have figures agreed by the end of the financial year, therefore the actual figure for the underspend may not be known until 2021/22.	Finance Services have been made aware of this, and an accruals process is in place. This process has been successful in previous years.

## 7 Policy alignment and compliance

- 7.1 A council that works for the community. This proposal will allow the Council to support some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

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### Appendices

None

### Background papers

None